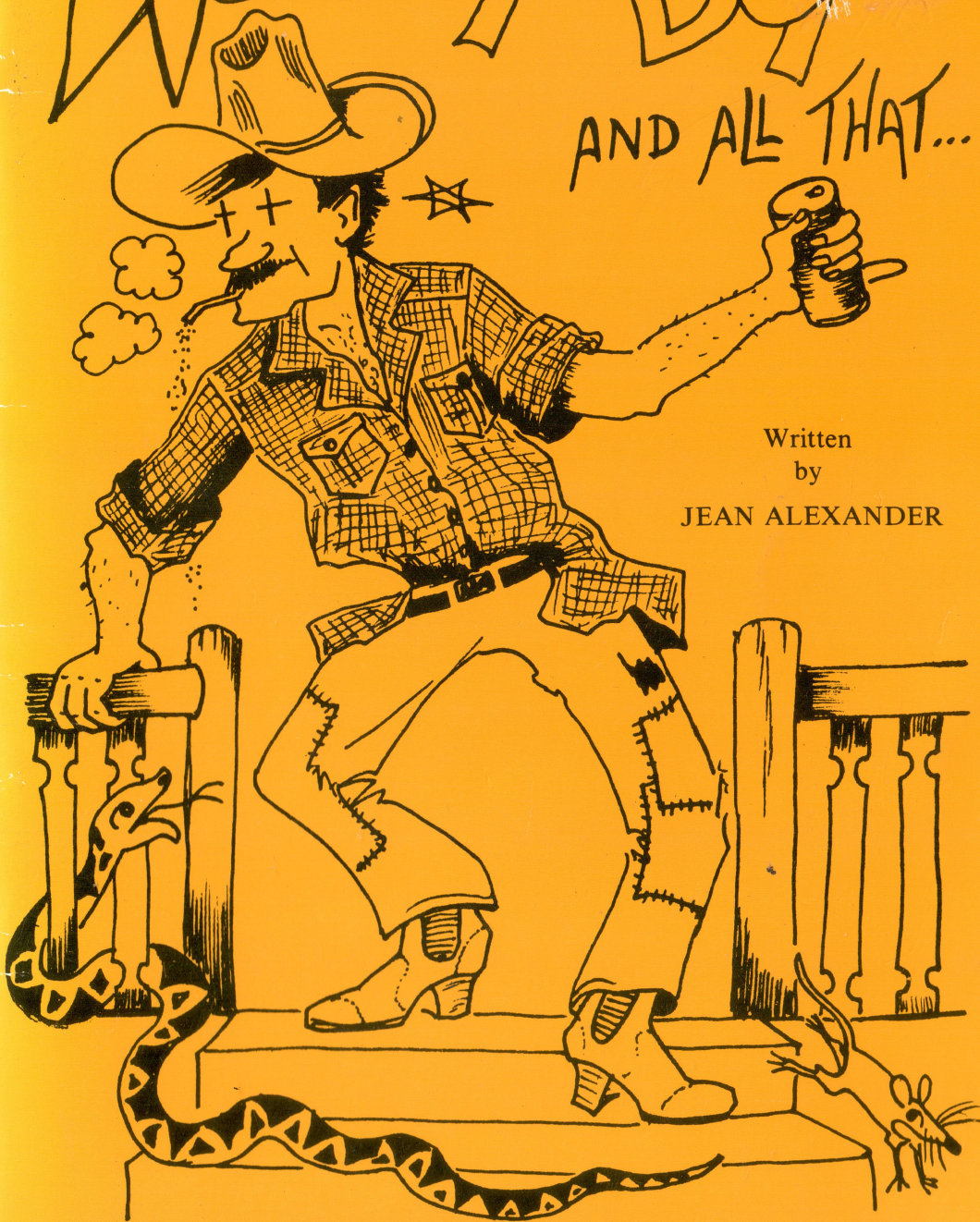


THE WOBBLY BOY

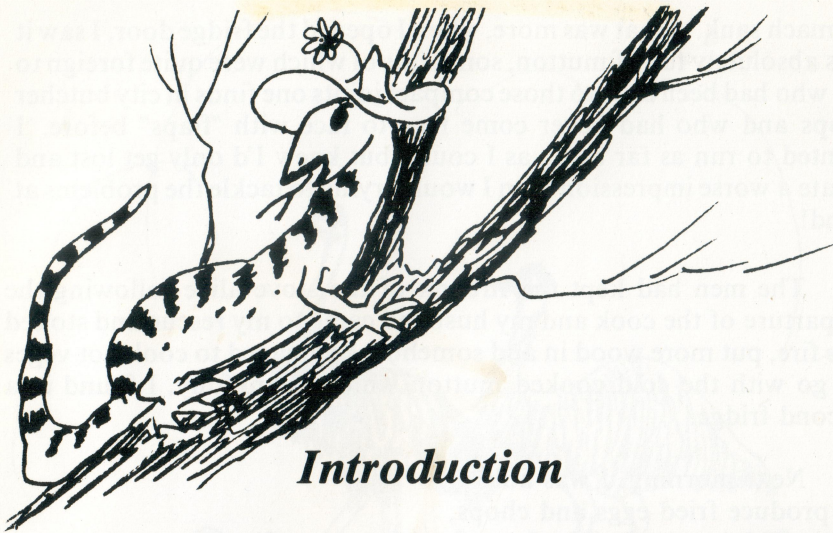
AND ALL THAT...

Written
by

JEAN ALEXANDER



~~John Deane~~



Introduction

I have decided to put pen to paper in an effort to immortalize some of the wonderful characters I have met in the bush, lest they be forgotten, as they are indeed a dying race.

To begin at the beginning, I found myself travelling along a highway heading west, wondering what to expect from this new life on which I was about to embark, for I had been married only two weeks and had previously lived in the city. This was a far cry from the sheep and cattle station about 1200 kilometres distant, which was to be my new home.

Each time I became apprehensive, my newly acquired spouse reassured me by reminding me that the property we were going to live on employed a cook, so I'd have plenty of time to unpack and get my bearings without worrying about cooking.

Imagine my horror on arriving at the homestead to learn that the cook had left the previous day, announcing that there wasn't room for two women on the place! It was midsummer and I will never forget how I felt when I walked into that huge, hot kitchen with its monstrous double-range wood stove, realizing that it was up to me to produce meals for four hard working men as well as my husband and myself.

After unpacking a few things and having a shower, I decided to take an aspro and sail into the kitchen looking full of confidence; however, each time I caught sight of that dreadful looking stove, my

stomach sank. What was more, when I opened the fridge door, I saw it was absolutely full of mutton, some cuts of which were quite foreign to me who had been used to those compact joints one finds in city butcher shops and who had never come face to face with "flaps" before. I wanted to run as far away as I could, but knew I'd only get lost and create a worse impression than I would trying to tackle the problems at hand!

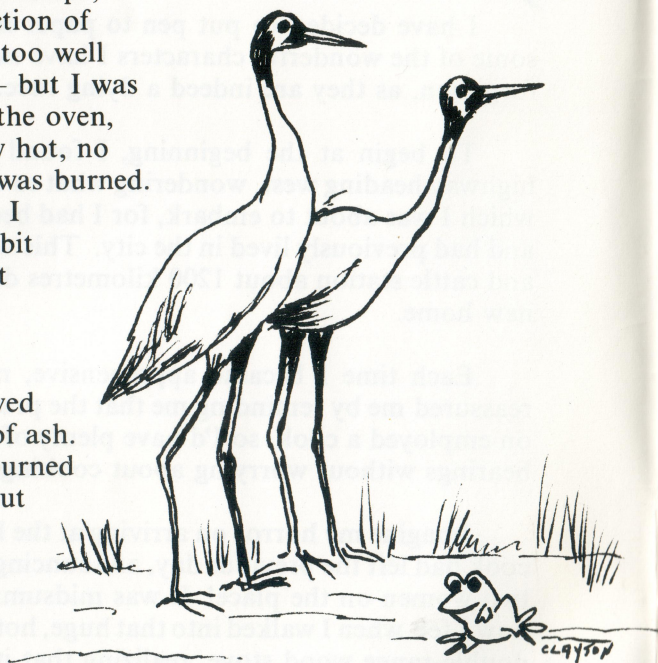
The men had kept the firebox of the stove alive following the departure of the cook and my husband came to my rescue and stoked the fire, put more wood in and somehow I managed to cook hot veges to go with the cold cooked mutton which, thankfully, I found in a second fridge.

Next morning, I was able to produce fried eggs and chops, apparently to the satisfaction of the men — or they were too well mannered to complain — but I was simply terrified of using the oven, which would not get very hot, no matter how much wood was burned.

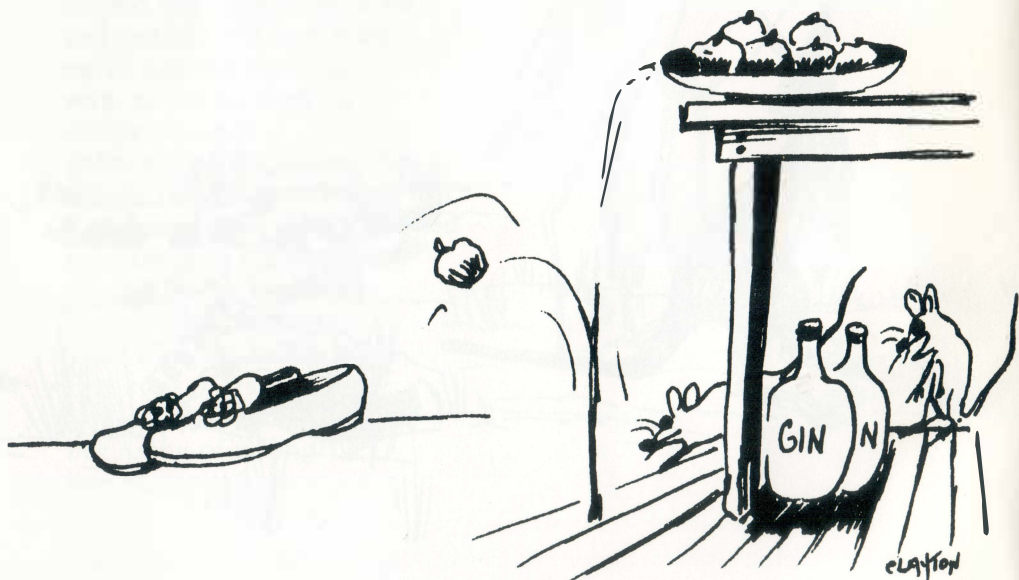
After nearly going crazy, I started poking around a bit and noticed ash had built up all around the oven wall, so set to work to scrape this out.

Believe it or not, I removed almost two buckets-full of ash. For a time after that, I burned everything in the oven, but eventually, by degrees, I tamed the monster!

That was just before my first cook, Mrs. Wilson, arrived. She was the beginning of a long line of cooks.







Mrs. Wilson

Things are not always what they seem — take the case of Mrs. Wilson!

The first morning she arrived in the kitchen ready for work, she was decked out in a white starched uniform plus a ridiculous little white cap. She announced she had recently had the honour of cooking for the Duke of Edinburgh when he visited a sheep stud in N.S.W. — hence the special uniform, I thought to myself! (Later I found out she had cooked bacon and eggs, served them on a plate which she handed to the Duke's Valet and that was the extent of her cooking for the Duke!)

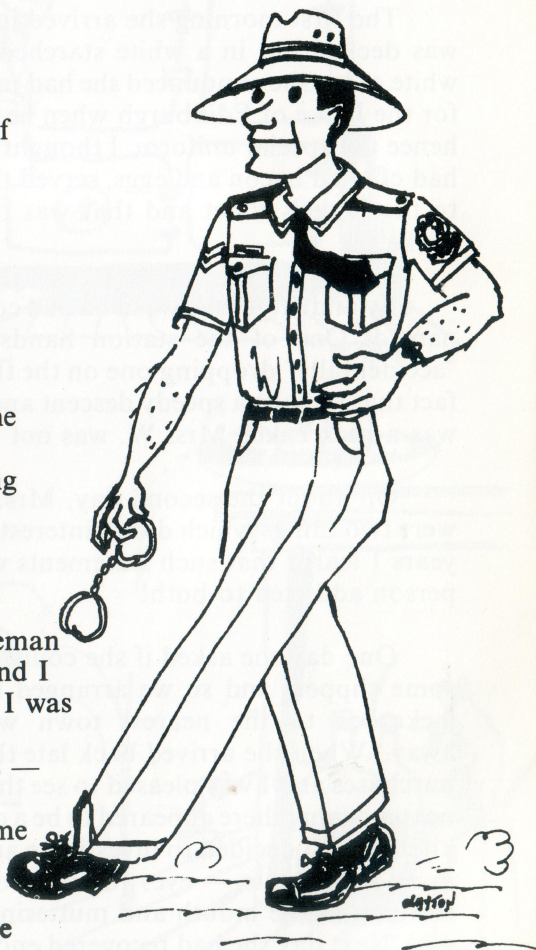
By and large, she wasn't a bad cook, but her rock cakes were aptly named! One of the station hands used to take great delight in "accidentally" dropping one on the floor and drawing attention to the fact that it made a speedy descent and didn't break on arrival, so really was a rock cake! Mrs. W. was not amused!

On about the second day, Mrs. W. announced to me that there were two things which didn't interest her — alcohol and sex! Over the years I learnt that such statements were usually an introduction to a person addicted to both!

One day she asked if she could go to town as she wanted to buy some slippers and so we arranged for her to go in with one of the jackeroos to the nearest town which was about 60 kilometres away. When she arrived back late that afternoon, she showed off her purchases and I was pleased to see that she was quite sober. However, next morning there appeared to be a complete absence of activity in the kitchen, so I decided to investigate and found *Cookie* lying in her bed in an awful state — eyes rolling around in her head, she was almost frothing at the mouth and muttering incoherently — also reeking of gin! Next day she had recovered enough to offer apologies and admit, "It was the same 'old trouble' but it wouldn't happen again!"

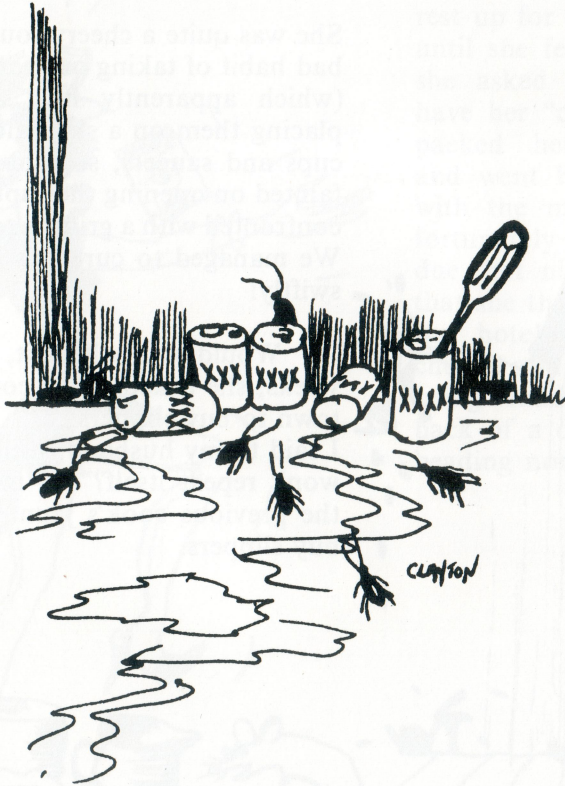
Everything was O.K. for a few more weeks when a windmill expert arrived to do some work and lived in his caravan about half a mile from the homestead with his girlfriend, who kept the caravan in a meticulous state and also did exquisite needlework. It was inevitable that she and cookie should get together from time to time. All was well until one Saturday when both ladies went to town and spent all afternoon in the "local" entertaining themselves in various ways. Eventually, they started to argue and fight and create quite a disturbance in the main street. The policeman arrived on the scene but "cookie" was smart

enough to get herself out of sight quickly but the other poor soul spent the night in the "cooler". Later in the evening, it began to rain. It appears "cookie" came out of hiding and found her way into the beer garden of the "local", crawled under one of the tables to get her head out of the rain and fell asleep, using her handbag as a pillow and keeping the rain off her body with her top-coat. There she spent the night on the very soggy ground in a state of oblivion! Early next morning the publican discovered her and phoned to let us know the cook was still in town and anxious to get back to the property before the local policeman discovered her. My husband and I both went in to pick her up as I was not sure what condition she would be in, and there she was — muddy from head to foot! After getting the poor soul home and cleaned up, we kept her in bed for a couple of days until she sobered up enough to move on to other pastures.



The windmill man went in to collect his "missus" from the lock-up and he was so furious with her, he made her sit in the back of the utility all the way back to the property. However, he turned out to be the loser, as he had forgotten about the three cartons of tinned beer he had in the back. By the time they reached their caravan, she managed to get revenge by viciously attacking the cans with a screwdriver she found on the floor of the ute. She had punched holes in the lot!

Next morning they moved on, and when they passed the homestead, the "missus" was once again sitting in the back of the utility, together with the dog and other bits and pieces, her long red hair flying in the wind. She was sporting a beaut black eye, but this time looking very subdued instead of victorious!



Nellie

The next cook was called "Nellie" and arrived on the mail truck during rain. The truck had been bogged several times and Nellie had been sporting enough to help the mailman get going. As a result, she arrived rather splattered with mud and wearing a tightly fitting black crepe dress and carrying her black suede shoes in her hand.

It appeared she had known better days and had left "The Isa" with her friend and \$2,000 in kitty, but had a few beans along the way. They were both broke by the time they reached Central Western Queensland on their way to Brisbane and decided to split up and look for work; so Nellie had applied for the job as cook.

She was quite a cheery soul but had a bad habit of taking out her false teeth (which apparently hurt a bit) and placing them on a shelf alongside the cups and saucers, so that one nearly fainted on opening the cupboard to be confronted with a grinning set of teeth! We managed to cure this habit fairly swiftly!

Would you believe it, after a few weeks, she asked if she could go into town to buy slippers!

I said to my husband, "Surely history won't repeat itself?" — remembering the previous cook's jaunt to town to buy slippers.



Off Nellie went next morning with one of the men on the station. Later in the afternoon the local storekeeper phoned me saying, "Has that cook of yours ever been in a Marching Girls' Team?" I replied, "I don't know — why?" He said, "Well, she's been in the pub all afternoon but now she's marching up and down the footpath swinging her arms high and stepping out like a marching girl, only she's toppling all over the place on her high heeled shoes!" He then added, "She also tried to march up the steps into my shop but collided with the Yates Seed Display Stand and there are packets of seed all over the place!". So much for buying slippers, I thought!



After making a hasty trip to town to recover the cook, we suggested she rest up for a day or two until she felt better, but she asked if she could have her "cheque", then packed her belongings and went back to town with the mailman, who fortunately for us, was due that night. It seems that she then returned to the hotel, "drank" the cheque and was last seen being loaded into the back of a drover's truck heading north!

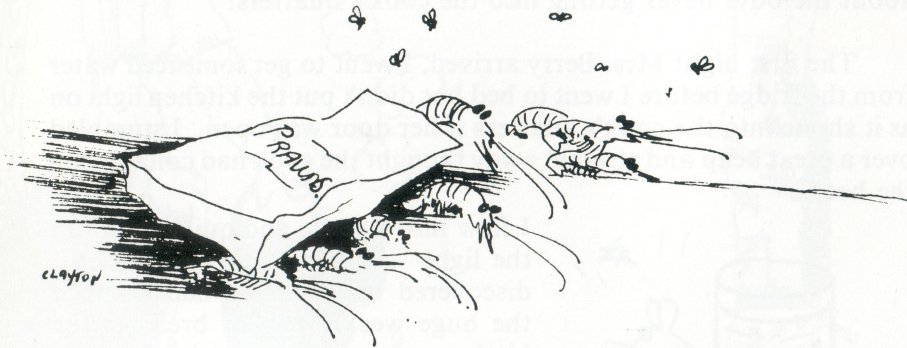
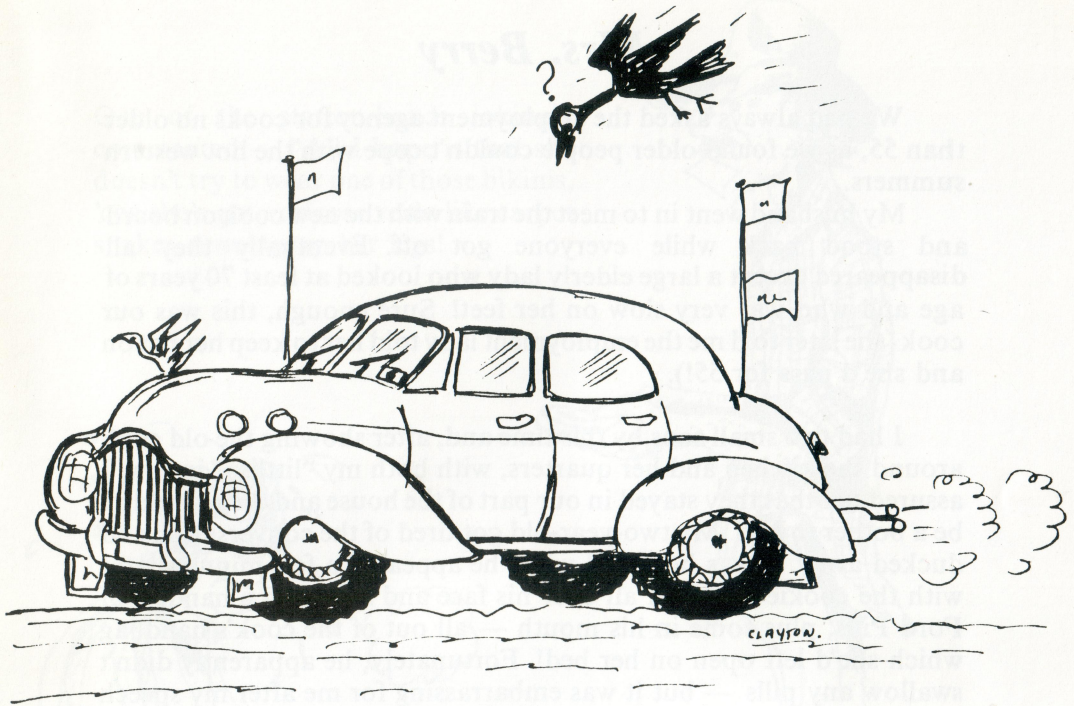
Edna

The next cook on the scene was Edna — very kind-hearted but not a marvellous cook; however, she was pleasant and tried very hard to please. She hadn't been with us long before she received a strange telegram from her sister, reading "Two thousand wonderful birthday wishes," which Edna explained meant a wealthy relative overseas had sent her the usual two thousand pounds (in those days) cheque for her birthday. Off she went to town to get the money which had been sent to the local bank. She arrived back with a brand new car with every possible gadget on it and in it. Edna wasn't happy with the usual ornament on the bonnet and had had that changed to a swan in flight, had a radio installed, also air-conditioning (which incidentally sprayed the front seat passengers with water all the time. As it was a cool time of the year, this had its problems). Mud flaps, seat covers, extra rear mirrors etc. had been added also. She arrived back on the property with gifts for everyone and a huge bag of prawns, which we all enjoyed immensely, when we celebrated her birthday with her later that night.

As well as all this, she bought a Movie Camera which made it unsafe for us to walk around the garden since she repeatedly darted out from behind trees or bushes shooting movies of us all — especially when she caught us in situations she thought were hilarious — we didn't always agree!

She was far too generous a person for her own good and went through her money quickly so that the payments on the car became a bit of a nuisance. To begin with, she had enough money to buy the car outright, without all the extra bits and pieces!!!

About that time, we were to move to another property and *cookie* decided to head south. I often wonder how long it was before she and the car parted company, but in the meantime she would have had much pleasure from it.



Mrs. Berry

We had always asked the employment agency for cooks no older than 55, as we found older people couldn't cope with the hot western summers.

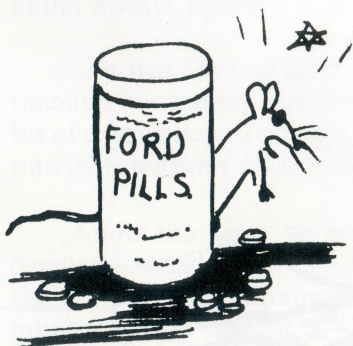
My husband went in to meet the train with the new cook on board and stood back while everyone got off. Eventually they all disappeared except a large elderly lady who looked at least 70 years of age and who was very slow on her feet! Sure enough, this was our cook (she later told me the employment lady told her to keep her hat on and she'd pass for 55!).

I had two small sons by this time and, after showing the old cook around the kitchen and her quarters, with both my "littlies" in tow, I assured her that they stayed in our part of the house and they wouldn't be a bother to her. My two-year-old got tired of the conversation and ducked away. I was horrified when he appeared a few minutes later with the cookie's lipstick all over his face and shirt and a handful of Ford Pills, plus some in his mouth — all out of the cook's handbag which she'd left open on her bed! Fortunately, he apparently didn't swallow any pills — but it was embarrassing for me after my speech about the boys never getting into the cook's quarters!

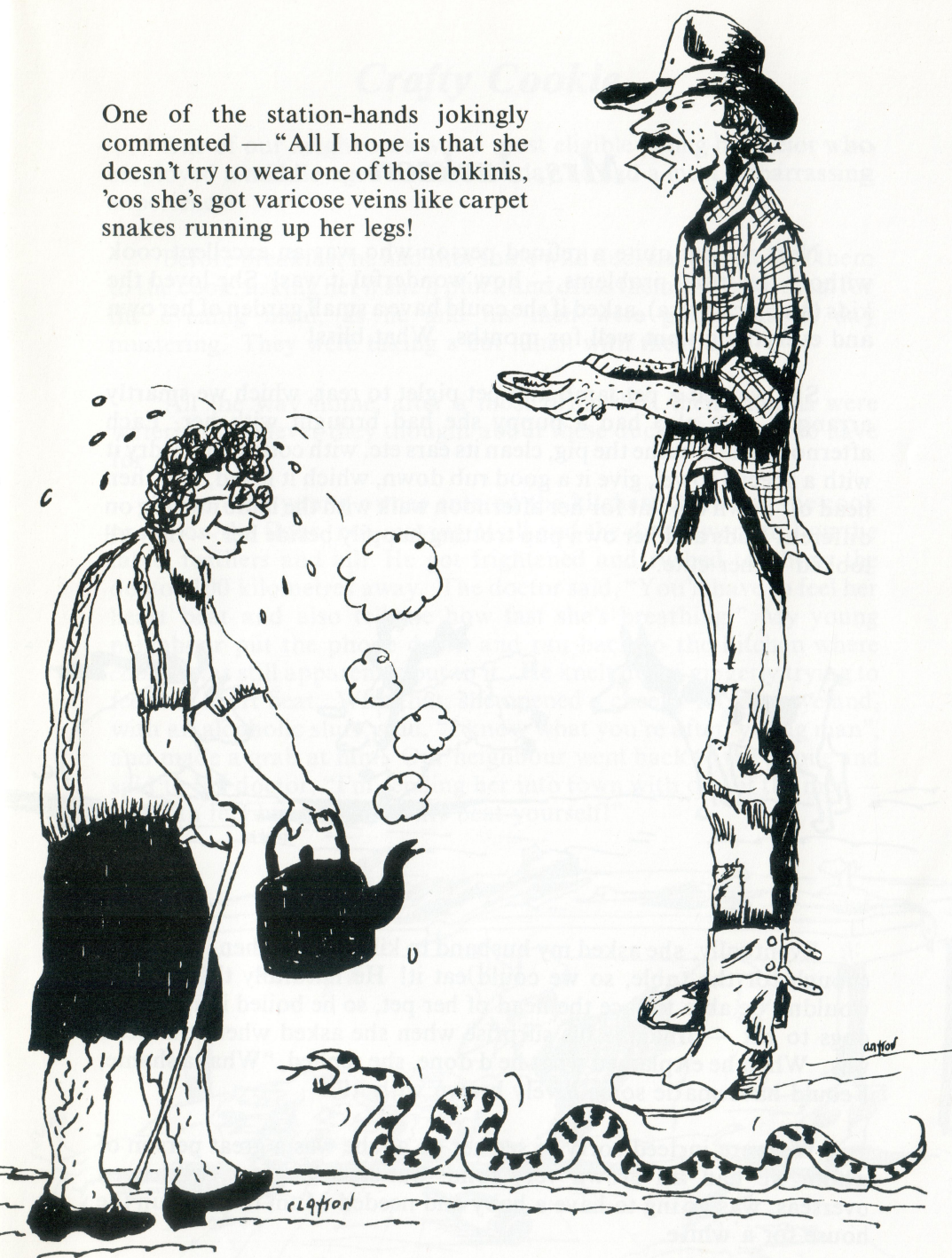
The first night Mrs. Berry arrived, I went to get some iced water from the fridge before I went to bed but didn't put the kitchen light on as it shone into the cook's quarters if her door was open. I stumbled over a great heap and straight away thought the cook had collapsed in the heat.

I flew into a panic and quickly put on the light — imagine my relief when I discovered the mailman had dumped the huge weekly bag of bread in the kitchen — that was what I fell over!

The poor old soul tried hard but the weather beat her in the end and she decided to head for the Gold Coast.



One of the station-hands jokingly commented — “All I hope is that she doesn’t try to wear one of those bikinis, ’cos she’s got varicose veins like carpet snakes running up her legs!



Mrs. Jackson

Next we got quite a refined person who was an excellent cook without the usual problems — how wonderful it was! She loved the kids (and vice-versa), asked if she could have a small garden of her own and everything went well for months. What bliss!

She wanted a pet lamb and pet piglet to rear, which we smartly arranged. She also had a puppy she had brought with her. Each afternoon she'd bathe the pig, clean its ears etc. with cotton buds, dry it with a special towel, give it a good rub down, which it loved, and then head off down the flat for her afternoon walk with the lamb and pig on different leads and her own pup trotting happily beside her — they all looked rather cute.



Eventually, she asked my husband to kill the pig when it grew big enough for the table, so we could eat it! He naturally thought she wouldn't be able to face the head of her pet, so he boiled it up for the dogs to eat — imagine his surprise when she asked where the head was. When he explained what he'd done, she replied, "What a shame, I could have made some lovely brawn with it!"

We were indeed sorry to see her go as she was a great person of whom we had all grown very fond; but her daughter, who lived overseas, was going to have a baby and needed Mum to help run the house for a while.

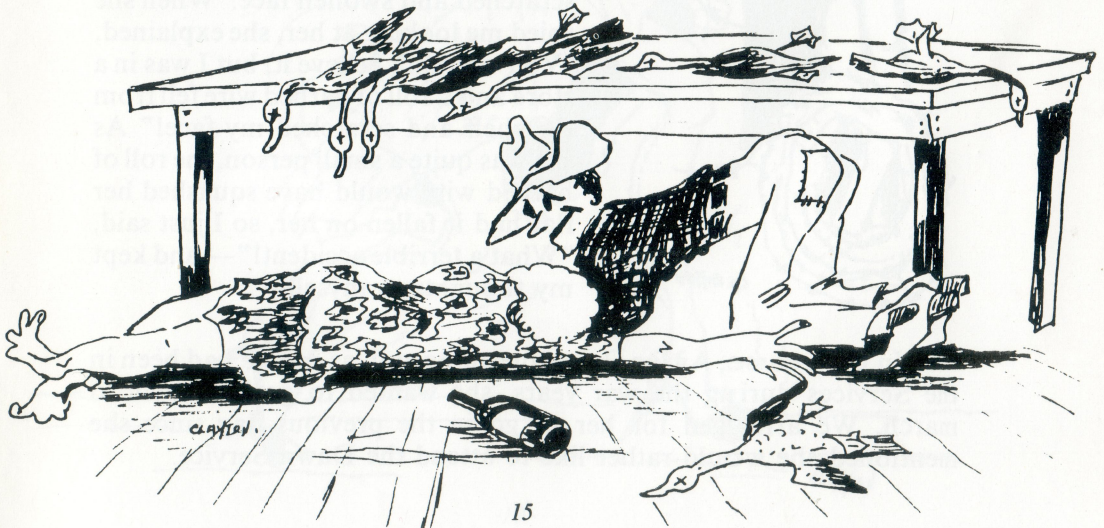
Crafty Cookie

One of our neighbours was a most eligible young batchelor who employed a middle-aged cook. One day he had a most embarrassing experience!

Before breakfast he had shot some wild ducks and presented them to the cook, asking her if she'd pluck and dress them and bake them for the evening meal, as he and his men were going out all day mustering. They were taking a cut lunch with them.

All the way home, after a most tiring day, their mouths were watering whenever they thought about these ducks they were to have for dinner.

When the young owner entered the kitchen, there was the cook prone on the floor, not moving at all and the ducks were still on the table, feathers and all! He got frightened and rushed to phone the doctor 100 kilometres away. The doctor said, "You'll have to feel her heart beat and also tell me how fast she's breathing." My young neighbour put the phone down and ran back to the kitchen where *cookie* was still apparently out to it. He knelt down gingerly trying to feel her heart beat. With that, she opened a cheeky looking eye and, with an alcoholic slurr, said, "I know what you're after, young man", and made a grab at him! Our neighbour went back to the phone and said to the doctor, "I'm sending her into town with one of the men — you can feel her bloody heart beat yourself!"



Elsie

Elsie was not a bad cook, but had the unfortunate habit of bursting into the lounge or dining room when we had guests, under the pretence that she wanted something from the storeroom. Really, she was trying to pick up some item of gossip to spread among the men over the dinner table.

We had put up with this for some time and then just before Christmas, she asked to go to town to see the visiting optometrist, so off she went on the mail truck. Apparently, she caught up with her estranged husband and they celebrated well together — don't know if she ever made it to the optometrist!



The husband later phoned to say his "ex-missus" was a bit the worse for wear and he'd bring her back the next day. He did this, but didn't even stop for a cuppa and disappeared in a cloud of dust heading towards town. I found out why very shortly, when I went to discuss the menu with *cookie*. She was wearing a very black eye and had a scratched and swollen face. When she spied me looking at her, she explained, "You wouldn't believe it, but I was in a store and a roll of barbed wire fell from the shelf and scratched my face!" As she was quite a small person, the roll of barbed wire would have squashed her flat had it fallen on her, so I just said, "What a terrible accident!" — and kept my thoughts to myself.

In due course, Anzac Day came along and, as *cookie* had been in the Services during the war years, she wanted to go into town to march. We arranged for her to go in the previous day since she mentioned she would rather like to attend the Dawn Service.

We went to town ourselves on Anzac Day to go to the Service during the morning and bring *cookie* home. When the march began, there she was in the front row, the only woman, decked out in a pale blue figured-organdie frock and matching fluffy hat perched on her head at a rakish angle, trying desperately to march in a straight line, as her legs were not obeying orders somehow! As they all turned "right" into Anzac Park, *cookie* failed to negotiate the corner and almost fell into the arms of the Police Inspector standing to attention and saluting smartly as the parade went past. She looked up at him and said, "That was a sharp bloody corner!"





After a day's recovery at home, all went along smoothly for some months; but after that, she decided to give her marriage another try, so left to catch up with her estranged husband. They both moved from the district, so I can't say just how successful they were.

So much for cooks....., but there were lots of other interesting folk in the bush, some of whom were terrific characters — take for instance...

Paddy

Paddy was a tall, wiry, more than middle-aged cowboy who had a head of unruly red hair which he wore rather long for those days.

The owner of the property we were on made periodic visits out from the city and, when Paddy heard she was coming, he took great pains to groom his hair for the occasion. He was a most independent person and wouldn't accept help from anyone, so made his own arrangements about the problem of his hair. First, he used to hack away as best he could with scissors and then he would roll a sheet of newspaper into a taper, light it and singe what was left of the moth-eaten mess at the back of his neck. This practice came to an abrupt end one day when his reflexes weren't quick enough to remove the taper at the right time. He almost set his whole head alight!

One day he suffered a nasty fly bite on his eyelid and his face became badly swollen, so I offered him a fly-veil to wear over his hat (although I really hadn't seen him actually with one, felt sure he must own one). He said, "No, I can't wear me hat, it's me bank — I keep all me cheques in it!" As he only went to town about three times per year, he used to keep his cheques for three or four months in his hat with a stone on top of them in case they blew away — no wonder he used to make station book-keeping difficult at times!

Ever since the war days, Paddy had been sending away to the Army Disposals Store for his clothing. He had been quite successful in this regard; however, as time went on, he sometimes received trousers a bit on the short side (he was over six feet tall) and this meant

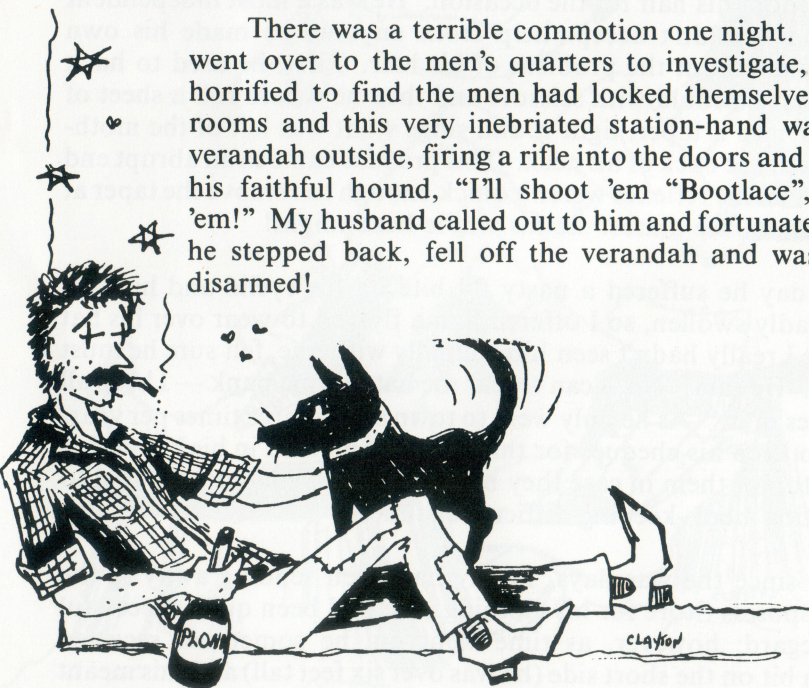
pulling his socks up over the bottom of the trousers and tying string around them to make sure they covered his legs — bowyang style! When this happened, he would ramp and rage saying, "It's these damned New Australians who are to blame for this — they are buying up all the good stuff and the Old Aussies are getting the rubbish!"

Paddy was a bit short of teeth and had only one in the front with large gaps on either side. One day the cook said to me, "I must remember to sit right opposite Paddy at the table tonight, as we are having *Spaghetti Bolognaise*. It's always fascinating watching him trying to eat it without spaghetti falling out the other side of his front tooth!

Bootlace

Then there was the station-hand who was a great worker while he kept away from alcohol. It was a different story when he over-imbibed!

There was a terrible commotion one night. When we went over to the men's quarters to investigate, we were horrified to find the men had locked themselves in their rooms and this very inebriated station-hand was on the verandah outside, firing a rifle into the doors and calling to his faithful hound, "I'll shoot 'em "Bootlace", you eat 'em!" My husband called out to him and fortunately for all, he stepped back, fell off the verandah and was quickly disarmed!



D'Arcy

D'Arcy answered our ad. for a cowboy/gardener and arrived straight from the Gold Coast where he had recently been playing in a band. There had been some kind of row and he headed west.

He kidded that he'd been on western Queensland properties before; but it didn't take long to find out that he hadn't, as he had no idea what went on. When asked if he'd ever killed a sheep before, he said, "Yes, but a long time ago" (he being all of 17 years at the time!) After being shown a couple of times, we felt he should be able to tackle this chore on his own.

Late one afternoon D'Arcy headed up towards the killing yard, but came back to me and said, "I just can't do it. I go weak at the knees every time it looks at me!" I explained that, since it was part of the cowboy's job to kill and cut up the sheep to provide us with meat for the table, he'd have to learn to do this, if he was to keep the job. Off the poor kid went and about an hour later he appeared in the kitchen looking pretty messy and very pale about the gills and said, "Well, I did it, but could I please now have two aspirins?" After that, he was O.K. and turned out to be quite a bushie in the end.

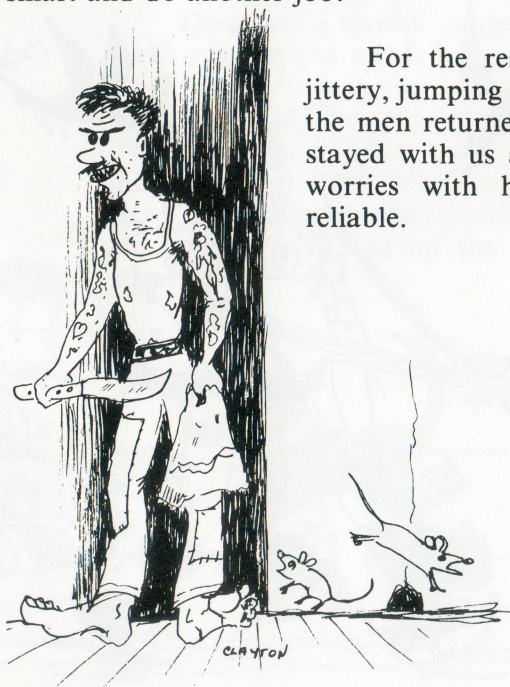


Philip

The next cowboy the agency sent out was a lad of 19 called Philip. The day after he arrived, the other men all went out for a day's mustering. After breakfast, I was busy washing the dishes when Philip appeared on the scene and offered to "dry up". I was very pleased about this and gratefully accepted his offer.

We chatted away while we worked and he exclaimed, "I've done a lot of this in my time." "Oh," said I, "Do you come from a large family?" "No," said Philip, "I've just got out of Boystown." Knowing that this was a sort of reform farm for delinquents, I tried to appear calm, wondering if my last moments had arrived, while he kept wiping away at the carving knife. I tried as normally as possible to carry on the conversation — "And what were you in there for, Phillip?" (butterflies madly fluttering about in my tummy!) — "Oh, just knocking off cars" — (imagine my relief!) and then he continued, "You probably read in the paper about five of us who escaped from Boystown last year and headed off to the Gold Coast. We would have got away with it too, if one of the other blokes hadn't decided to get smart and do another job!"

For the rest of the day I was rather jittery, jumping at every unusual sound until the men returned at dusk. However, Philip stayed with us a long time and we had no worries with him and found him most reliable.



The Undertaker

There was a fellow in a very small country town who acted, among other things, as undertaker, and was faced with the task of going out on to a property where the sole occupant had died and the body had to be laid out prior to burial.

The “departed” had been sitting in a chair on the verandah when he died, which made things a little more difficult when it came to putting the body into the coffin.

The “undertaker” felt he would have to go into the little town to get some help. A part-aboriginal fellow, who had spent a considerable amount of time in the “local” offered to help, so off they went.

Everything was going along satisfactorily, until the young aboriginal lost his grip as they were proceeding, causing the body to sit up, making frightening windy noises! The darker man suddenly went pale and took off like lightning with his arms outstretched above his head — no time to open the verandah door, straight through the rusty gauze he went, leaving the imprint of his body with outstretched arms, as he fled! — and no doubt becoming more sober each minute!



Clive

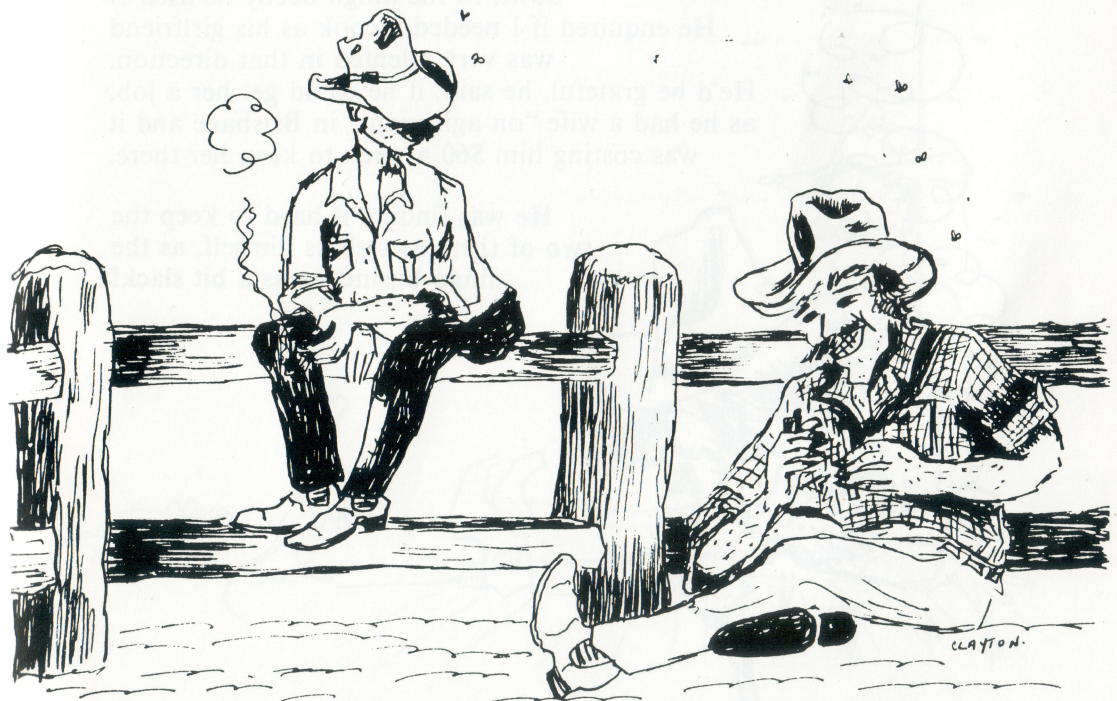


Clive was possibly one of the most interesting people I have ever met. In his latter days, he became our gardener and odd job man. I never tired of listening to his stories of yesteryear.

He had been one of the first mailmen on a far western mailrun — he carried heavy machinery and furniture which he often had to load and unload on his own, he used to cut hair, attend to troublesome teeth etc. as he went on his merry way. When I asked him how he pulled the teeth, he said, “Oh, I didn’t pull them, I just dropped some hydrochloric acid from an eyedropper into the holes of the painful ones and that seemed to fix them up!”

Then he told me about the two fellows who had worked together for quite a while on a remote property in the far south west of Queensland. One day they were talking and decided they’d make arrangements to be buried next to one another in the little cemetery in the nearest town. Then they went a step further and thought they’d like to have really decent sorts of coffins, so sent away for them, giving their respective measurements. Eventually the coffins arrived, but as these two fellows thought they still had quite a lot of living to do, there didn’t seem any point in having these ornate pieces of furniture lying idle — they sat them up on their ends and used them for wardrobes for the time being!







Black Olives

Some years ago, when a Graziers' Meeting of special importance was held, an old fellow who rarely socialized, decided to attend the meeting and the cocktail hour which preceded it.

Among other delicacies, there was a dish of black olives on the table. He nonchalantly picked one up and popped it into his mouth. Then he hurriedly spat it out and turned to his mate saying, "For heaven's sake, don't touch the prunes, the cat's pissed on them!"

The "Dogger"

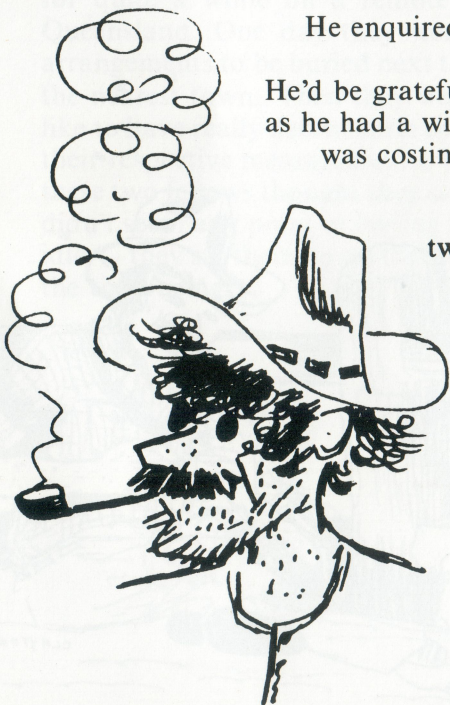
Then there was this "dogger" who called one day — he was employed by a syndicate of properties to try to catch dingoes which were killing sheep and lambs.

He always had an odd smell about him, which I put
down to the dingo decoy he used !!

He enquired if I needed a cook as his girlfriend
was very talented in that direction.

He'd be grateful, he said, if he could get her a job,
as he had a wife "on agistment" in Brisbane and it
was costing him \$60 a week to keep her there.

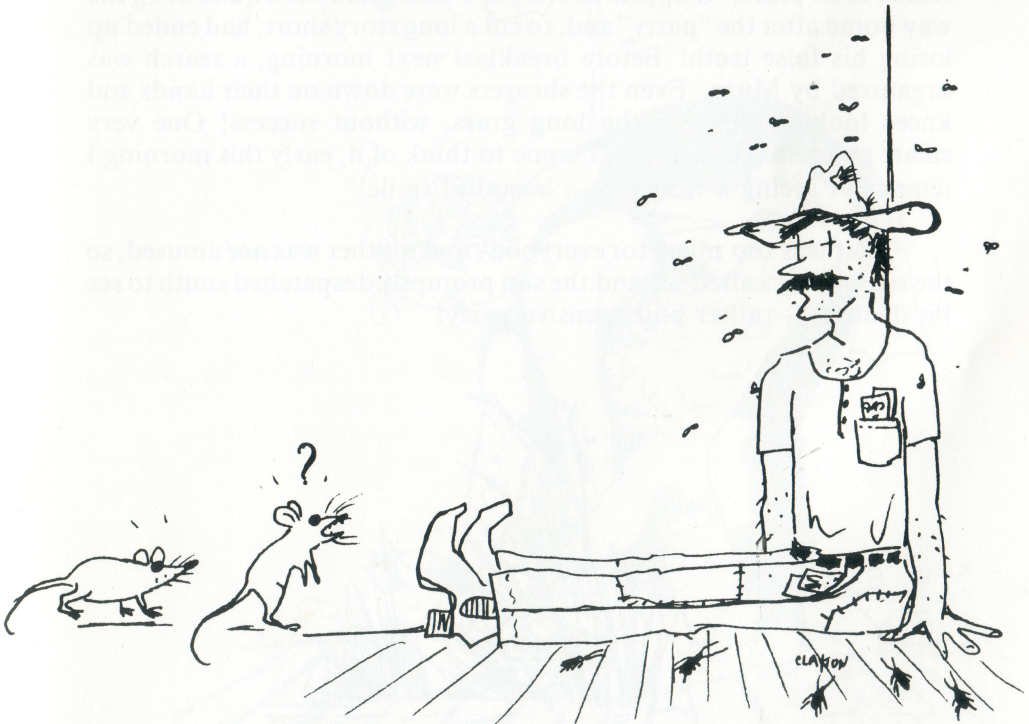
He was finding it hard to keep the
two of them as well as himself, as the
dingo business was a bit slack!



Opal Gougers

Three outback opal gougers decided to head for the nearest pub, which was miles away, but where the publican used to exchange their opals for cash when they brought them in.

After conducting their business, they settled down to steady drinking until one poor fellow had a heart attack and died. The policeman in the district was away at the time, so, until they could inform him about what had happened, the other two propped him up in the corner of the pub, went on drinking, and each time it came to their departed mate's shout, they took the money out of his pocket!



Bertie

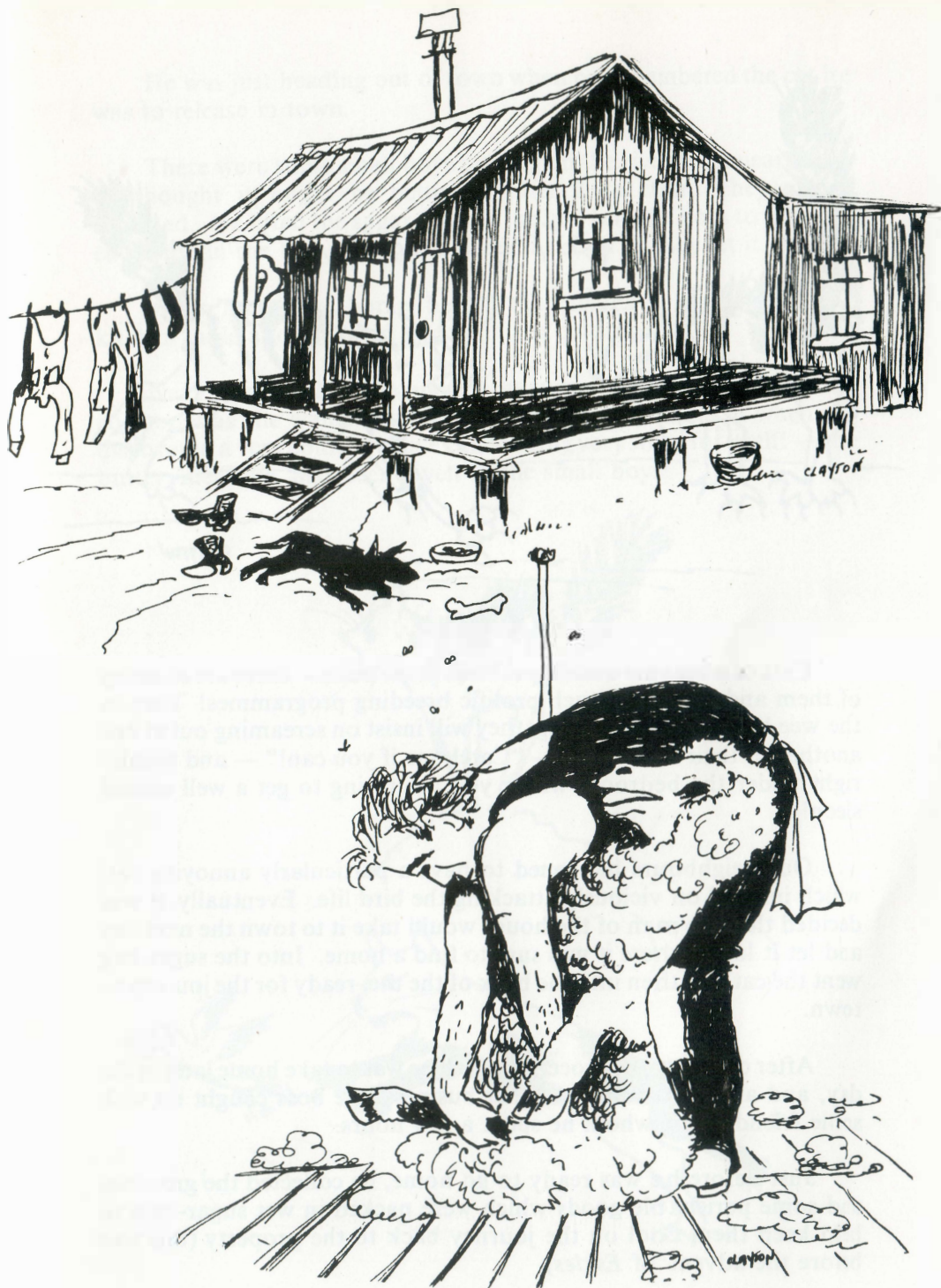
There was a time when the property owner came up from the city with her son on one of their regular visits.

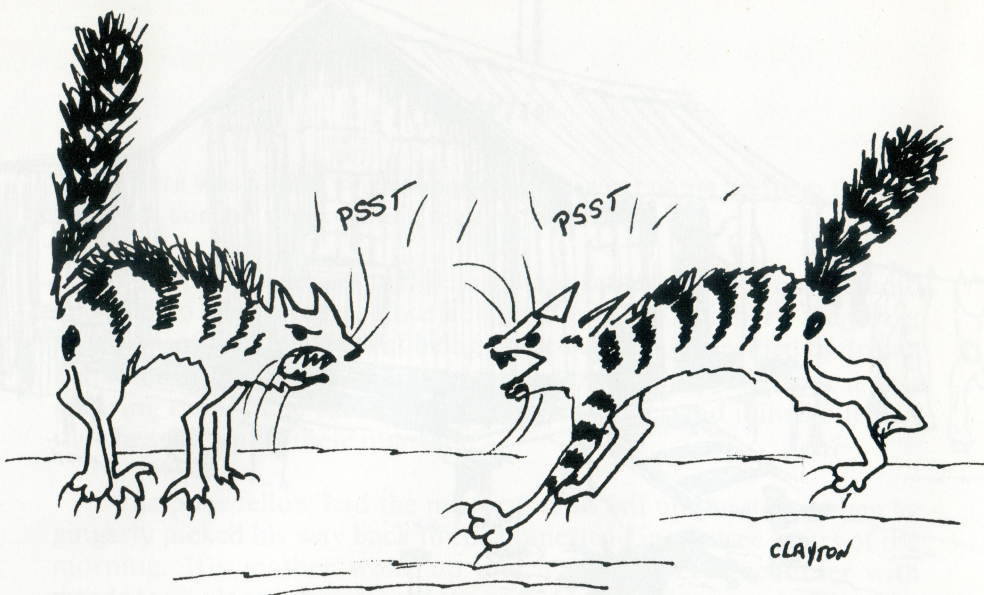
The son was almost middle-aged but rather under Mum's thumb and had to obey orders, since he hoped one day to inherit the place; however, after a few days of being bossed about, he decided to drown his sorrows! This was made relatively easy by the fact that it was shearing time, so he excused himself after dinner and joined a few of the shearers up at their quarters.

The poor fellow had the misfortune to fall up the steps, when he gingerly picked his way back to the homestead in the wee hours of the morning. His mother woke up and a fairly lively encounter with words took place. It appeared the poor bloke had been quite ill on the way home after the "party" and, to cut a long story short, had ended up losing his false teeth! Before breakfast next morning, a search was organized by Mum. Even the shearers were down on their hands and knees looking through the long grass, without success! One very smart guy remarked, "Now I come to think of it, early this morning I remember seeing a ram with a beautiful smile!"

That was too much for everybody and mother was *not* amused, so the search was called off and the son promptly despatched south to see his dentist — rather an expensive party!







Cats

Cats can become quite a problem in the bush — there are so many of them and they have such prolific breeding programmes! Then in the wee hours of the morning, they will insist on screaming out at one another in their own lingo — “Catch me if you can!” — and usually right under the bedroom where you are trying to get a well earned sleep!!

Our neighbours happened to have a particularly annoying cat, which insisted on viciously attacking the bird life. Eventually, it was decided that the man of the house would take it to town the next day and let it loose where it was sure to find a home. Into the sugar-bag went the cat and then into the back of the ute, ready for the journey to town.

After ordering the groceries which he was to take home later in the day, and after attending to other business, the boss caught up with some friends with whom he spent a few hours.

Just before he was ready to go home, he collected the groceries and some perishable goods which were packed in wet sugar-bags to help keep them cool on the journey back to the property (this was before the advent of *Eskies*).

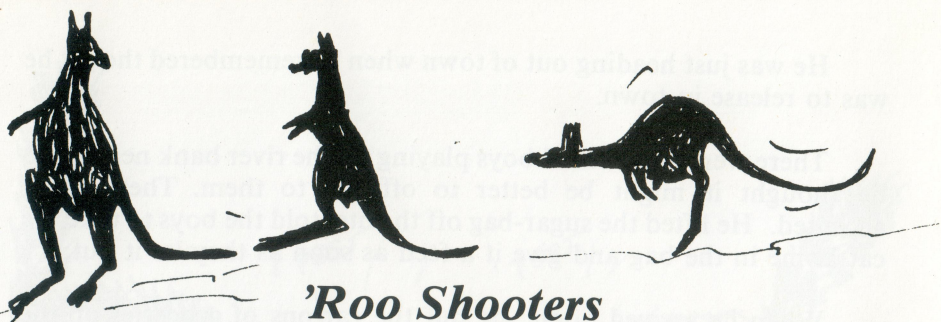
He was just heading out of town when he remembered the cat he was to release in town.

There were some small boys playing on the river bank nearby, so he thought it might be better to offer it to them. They gladly accepted. He lifted the sugar-bag off the ute, told the boys to take the cat home in the bag and give it a feed as soon as they let it out.

When he arrived home, he put the cartons of groceries on the kitchen table and the 'cold goods' in the coldroom.

Next morning, his wife opened the sugar-bag of perishables in the coldroom as she wanted some butter. She nearly had a fit when she discovered a very cold, but alive cat, looking very sorry for itself! — the butter, meat etc. had been given to the small boys!





'Roo Shooters

There were some professional kangaroo shooters operating out west, trying to control the 'roo population, which was in plague proportions at the time.

One of the shooters became ill and died. As it had been raining heavily, the creeks were flooded and the shooters were prevented from getting to town with the body. They walked to the nearest homestead and phoned the police station one hundred and fifty kilometres away, to tell them what had happened. The police told the shooters there would have to be a post-mortem and they would come out as soon as they could cross the flooded creeks, to collect the body, but in the meantime suggested they keep him in the freezer where they had their kangaroo carcasses. In due time, the police arrived and as they picked up the body, said, "For such a tall fellow, he weighs very light!" "Oh," said the shooters, "We had to gut him before we put him in with the roos in case he sent them off!" — so much for the autopsy!



Harry

Harry was our pet Galah which we had reared since he fell out of a nest as a baby. He had full run of the homestead garden and also used to come into the house at every opportunity.

We all loved Harry and he was “boss of the walk” to say the least — our visitors loved him too as he used to climb up on their shoulders and settle down to be in the party.

When the time came for us to move to town to live, Harry had as many problems adjusting to the new life as the rest of us did; however, he had *one* unique experience the first night we were there. He had never been in a cage, but we decided to lock him in the laundry/toilet and perched him up high on the dividing wall, lest any prowling cats discovered him.

Next morning my husband was up early, only to discover Harry had fallen off his perch — right into the toilet bowl. There he was with only his head above water, patiently waiting to be rescued! We hastily dried him with a towel, put him on the back of a chair in the sun on the verandah — and waited..... We really felt he would die of a chill as it was winter time; however, luckily, he was his old cheeky self again in a couple of hours.

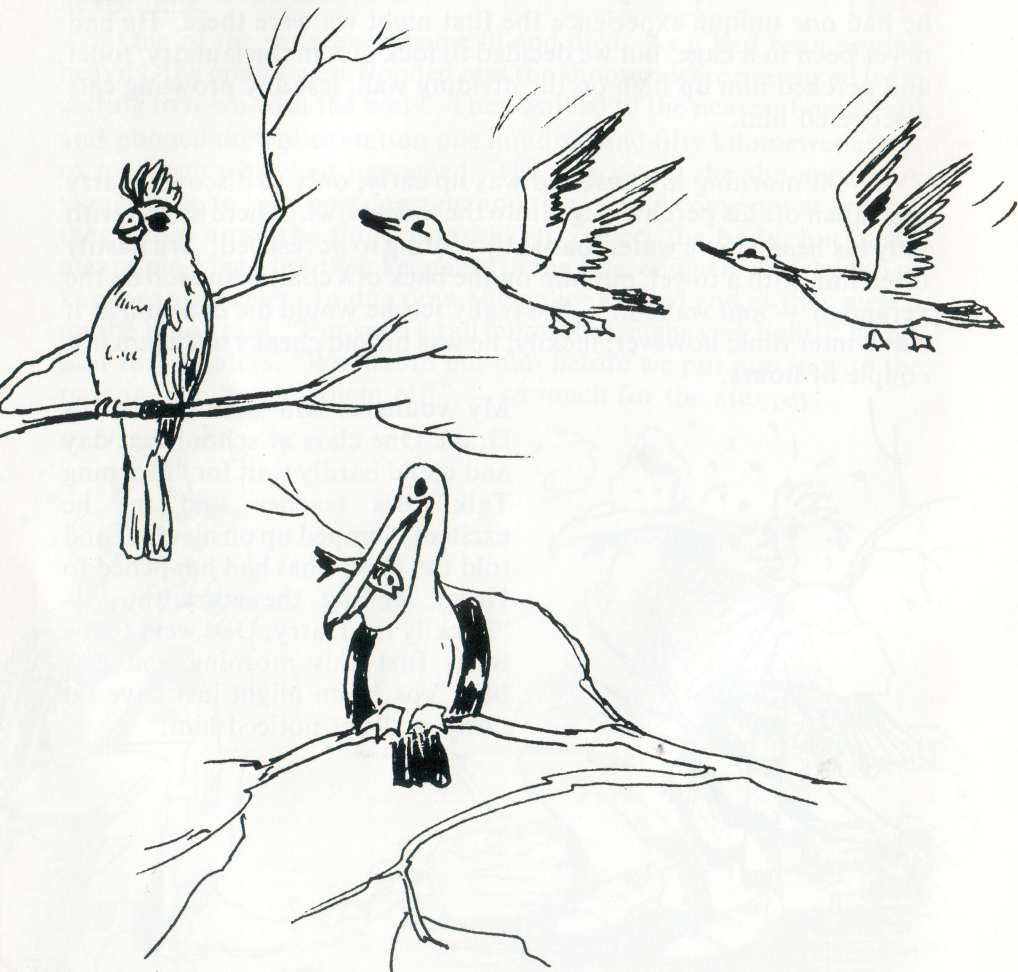


My youngest son went off to his Grade One class at school that day and could hardly wait for “Morning Talk”. His teacher told me he excitedly jumped up on his chair and told the class what had happened to Harry, ending the story thus — “Luckily for Harry, Dad went to the toilet first this morning and saw him, ’cos Mum might just have sat down and not noticed him!”

Now we live on the Coast in retirement — or I believe that's what they call this busy life we lead!!

I feel most nostalgic when I recall my early days in the bush and remember the wonderful characters I met and realize just how much better off I am to have known them!!

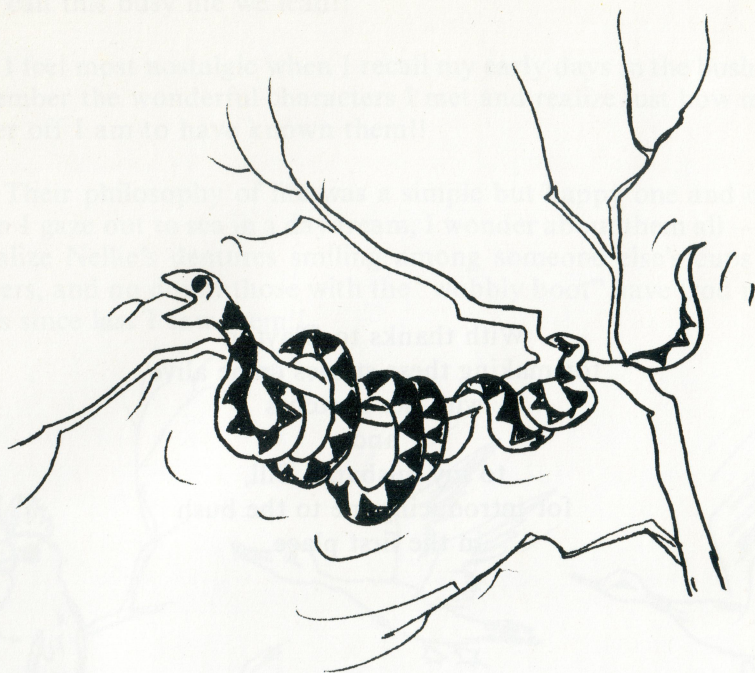
Their philosophy of life was a simple but happy one and often when I gaze out to sea in a daydream, I wonder about them all — can visualize Nellie's dentures smiling among someone else's cups and saucers, and no doubt those with the "wobbly boot" have trod many miles since last I saw them!!



With thanks to Clayton
for making these stories come alive
with her sketches
and
to my husband, Bill,
for introducing me to the bush
in the first place.



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